

# National Coal Policy for Canada

## *The Case*

*For Conserving the Financial Resources of Canada; Increasing Employment; Reducing Relief Expenditure, and Improving Dominion-Provincial and Inter-Provincial Relations, by Means of a National Coal Policy, as presented to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations.*

*by*

L. R. LIPSETT, K.C., LL.D., O.B.E.

REVISED AND PUBLISHED  
BY AUTHORITY OF

THE NATIONAL COAL COMMITTEE.  
CALGARY, ALBERTA

THE WESTERN CANADA FUEL  
ASSOCIATION,  
316 NANTON BUILDING,  
WINNIPEG, MAN.



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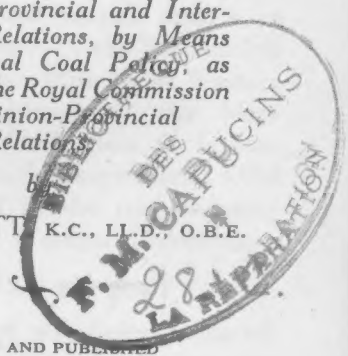
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## *Preface*

THE written brief originally presented to the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial relations, (presided over by the Honorable Newton W. Rowell, LL.D., Chief Justice of Ontario) was prepared by the Western Canada Fuel Association. This Association, founded some eighteen years ago, embraces among its membership nearly all the substantial coal mine Operators and most of the Wholesalers and Retail Dealers throughout Western Canada. In addition to the Mine Operators and Wholesalers, it is concerned with the well-being of about 3,000 Dealers engaged in the coal industry throughout the Western Provinces.

### **WORKERS' SUPPORT**

While the brief was being prepared, it became apparent that prosperity in the coal industry would be reflected over a much larger field and that large bodies of organized and other mine workers; and of Railway employees (who would secure work by transpor-

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tation of coal) would benefit greatly by the increased use of Canadian coal.

It was decided, in consequence, to approach the Organizations representing these workers, with the result that the brief secured the full support of the organized mine workers, represented by District 18 of the United Mine Workers of America, embracing all the organized mine workers of Western Canada (8,500), and of the railway employees, represented by the International Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

#### GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

With this greatly increased support secured, the brief and a general outline of the oral representations were submitted to the Minister of Lands and Mines for the Province of Alberta the Honorable N. E. Tanner; who stated that after having had the privilege of scanning the brief, he felt that it dealt fairly with the case and that, "It is to be hoped that the Dominion Government will recognize this as a National Problem worthy of their most earnest consideration." In reference

to the oral representations made to the Royal Commission setting out the benefits that would accrue to the entire Dominion of Canada, the Honorable Mr. Tanner wrote:

"This, I think, is an important angle from which to view the case, as the effects of a solution would be very far reaching."

Since then the Government of the Province of Alberta has given valuable financial and other assistance and welcome support has been forthcoming from other provinces and others interested throughout Canada.

In view of the very welcome assistance received from all the above sources, further study has been devoted to the subject, which goes to show that the problem should be approached from the highest National standpoint. The interests of Canada as a whole, are deeply involved, when so many members of the Canadian family are in distress and feel that they are not getting a fair deal under the Canadian partnership. The coal resources of Canada, if fully availed of, will go far to solve the many and serious problems with which the Dominion is confronted.

## PUBLIC APPEAL

It was decided, therefore, to set out for public consideration, the reasons on which these conclusions are founded and to present shortly, the facts relating to the coal resources of Canada and their importance to the entire Dominion. With this object in view, the following revised summary of the brief and of the oral representations to the Royal Commission is submitted to the Canadian people in the sincere belief that the policy advocated, if adopted, will help in solving the National problems of Unemployment and Relief, and will remove the sense of injustice which is felt throughout many parts of Canada at the present time.

L. R. LIPSETT,  
CHAIRMAN NATIONAL COAL COMMITTEE.

*Calgary, 3rd October, 1938.*



# *The Case for a National Coal Policy*

IN considering the relationship existing between the various Provinces of the Dominion, and between the Individual Provinces and the Dominion as a whole, two outstanding facts emerge.

The first of these is the inability of the Western Provinces and of the individual citizens of these Provinces, to meet their obligations, under the present economic set-up. The second outstanding fact is the terrific strain which has been imposed on the finances of the entire Dominion during the past ten years (most of them years of depression) by sending out of the country, sums aggregating over \$500,000,000 to pay for coal imported from the United States of America, all of which might have been obtained from Canadian sources, with the consequent retention of this enormous wealth within the Dominion.

## THE WESTERN UNECONOMIC SET-UP

In dealing with the first of these problems, it is well known that, save for her coal resources, Western Canada has been dependent almost entirely on agriculture for her existence.

This history of the Western Provinces is the history of about the past forty years. In the case of the Province of Alberta, the total population was less than 75,000 people, as recently as 1901. In the early part of the present century, large amounts of capital came into these Western Provinces for agricultural development. For practical purposes their existence and development depended on the export of wheat. This wheat usually passed through Eastern Canada and provided employment there during its transportation to the world markets, where it had to be sold. No market for any of it was provided by Eastern Canada.

The amount of money received for the wheat crop, year by year, did not necessarily bear any relationship to the cost of production in Western Canada, but was controlled solely by world prices. Such prices were greatly affected by the fact that in the case of almost every other wheat exporting country, the wheat belts lay in close proximity to the sea ports. In the Scandinavian and in fact in all European countries;

in Australia and in New Zealand, railway transportation was over short distances. In the Argentine the railway haul averaged little more than 200 miles. From Western Canada, on the other hand, the railway haul to the head of the Lakes, was around 1,200 miles, to which had to be added over 5,000 miles of sea transportation, or if the wheat was moved by Vancouver it entailed a railway haul of six or seven hundred miles, with a sea journey of 10,000 miles in addition. The result of all this was that the actual money received, left a very small (if any) margin to provide a livelihood for the Western farmer.

During all these forty years, the Eastern Provinces were becoming more and more highly industrialized and owing to the voting power resulting from the numbers of their people, they were able to insure from the Dominion Parliament, full protection for their manufacturing industries, quite irrespective of any result that this policy might have on the life and well-being of the West.

During this period the Western farmer had to purchase all his equipment and supplies from the East, at highly protected prices, while Eastern Canada bought practically nothing of what the Western farmer could produce.

That this system was economically unsound, would have been apparent much earlier but for two factors. During the first ten or twelve years of the century, large sums of outside capital kept pouring into the West, and out of these sums the adverse trade balance as between the West and East was largely provided for. But even as early as the period from 1910-1914 the unsoundness of the system was becoming obvious, and depression was facing Western Canada.

At this stage the second factor — the World War — intervened and for a number of years the unsoundness of the economic relationship between East and West, was concealed again by the abnormally inflated prices available for agricultural products during the war and early post-war period. Whilst these agricultural prices were so abnormally inflated the West was able, or apparently was able, to shoulder the adverse trade balance as between East and West; but, once the period of inflated prices came to an end, and agricultural prices returned to what must now be regarded as normal, the West became increasingly unable to pay for the Eastern manufactured goods which they required, at the highly protected prices at which they could be obtained. Resort was then increasingly

had, both by Governments, Municipalities, and individuals, to borrowing, to meet these adverse balances.

The result was that other Eastern interests (in this case financial companies) entered the picture and the interest due on their advances had to be paid out of the money received for exported agricultural products, and a position developed where the East took from Western agriculture, a large annual sum for manufactured goods, plus a further levy on agricultural products, exported, for their transportation through the Eastern Provinces, plus a yearly increasing sum for interest on money lent to pay the adverse trade balances.

### **FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES OF THE WEST**

It should have been clear that the West could not continue indefinitely to pay the East around \$150,000,000 per annum for their manufactured goods produced under a high tariff wall, unless they could sell something of approximately equivalent value. For several years the crash that was inevitable, was staved off by Governmental, Municipal and individual borrowings, but the make-shift system of borrowing each year to meet existing obligations and to pay interest upon interest, could not go on indefinitely. In the end the crash was

bound to come, quite irrespective of what type of Government existed at any time in any of the Western Provinces.

The present situation of default, in Alberta for instance, is the result, not of any Machiavellian machinations of the Government now in power, but is a clear case of cause and effect, directly resulting from the unsound economic system, forced on Western Canada.

It has been stated by the Hon. Norman McLeod Rogers, in his case for Nova Scotia, presented in 1931, that existing tariffs have secured for the Province of Ontario a net gain of over \$51,000,000 per year or over \$15.00 yearly for every individual in Ontario, while the Province of Alberta had a net annual loss, by reason of these tariffs of close on \$20,000,000 or over \$26.00 per year for every inhabitant in the Province. The adjoining Province of Saskatchewan had an annual net loss, owing to existing tariffs, of over \$25,000,000, or over \$28.00 per year for every inhabitant in that Province.

These figures have been subjected to some criticism, but whether or not they can be attacked in detail, the broad fact remains and cannot be contradicted, that the Province of Ontario is making an enormous annual gain under the present tariff system, by draining the life blood of the Western Provinces.

The sense of injustice rankling in the minds of the people of Western Canada by reason of the present system, is going far to weaken the sense of unity of the Canadian people; and there are men, who a few years ago would not have dreamed of secession, as a remote possibility, now seriously talking of a Division of Canada as a lesser evil than the one under which they are at present suffering.

### THE MARITIME PROVINCES

The foregoing observations apply with equal force, to the Maritime Provinces. They are equally members of the Canadian family, and deserve the same consideration and the same measure of justice in their dealings with the manufacturing interests of Quebec and Eastern Ontario, and the powerful financial interests centered in Montreal.

The plea for a fair deal for all members of the Canadian family, is made as sincerely on behalf of them as of the Western Provinces, and is founded on the belief that all Canada, including Ontario and Quebec, will benefit in the long run by an equitable trade balance throughout the Dominion.

### COAL SUPPLIES THE REMEDY

The only Western product which could have been used during all these

years to redress the unfavorable trade balance against the West, was coal. Throughout Canada there are coal supplies estimated at twelve-hundred-million-thousands of tons and estimated by Professor Stephen Leacock as sufficient to supply the Dominion for thirty-six thousand years. These are truly staggering figures, and many millions of tons more than those which have given Britain the prosperity she has enjoyed during the past hundred years.

Had the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec during the past thirty years, taken a broad view of what was necessary for the prosperity of Canada as a whole, and had those Provinces adapted themselves to using Canadian coal, much might have been done to redress the adverse trade balance, but Eastern Canada blindly continued to import millions of tons of American coal, for the sake of immediate savings in expense, regardless of the fact that this was bound to make other Provinces, sooner or later, unable to pay for the goods they manufactured.

Results, apparent to everyone today, might well have been foreseen for a number of years past, had a longer view been taken by the Eastern manufacturing and financial interests, by the Canadian railways, and by the various Governments from time to time in power.



## THE DRAIN ON NATIONAL FINANCES

The second outstanding fact which emerged from a study of the problem from the National standpoint, is the enormous annual drain on Canadian resources necessary to pay for importations of American coal. In the Coal Statistics for Canada,\* published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, it is stated that about \$450,000,000 were sent out of Canada during the last ten years for imported coal, practically all of which was sent to the United States of America. This was the figure paid to the American mine owners for coal, and when the railway freights from the American mines to the Canadian border are added, the money sent out of the country during these ten years, would far exceed \$500,000,000, or a sum of over \$50,000,000 each year.

Consider for one moment what this sum, if it had been kept at home, would have meant to Canada, and the effect it would have had on the balance of trade as between Canada and the outside world. Consider also the effect, during these past ten years, of the creation within Canada of this \$50,000,000 of new wealth each year, and its contribution to the well-being of the country, and to the problem of unem-

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\* Coal Statistics for Canada, 1936. Page 18.

ployment, which has been so acute during most of the period.

If one assumes that \$5.00 per day would represent an average day's wage, then this \$50,000,000 annually sent out of Canada would represent approximately 10,000,000 days work each year, or enough to give employment to well over 40,000 unemployed men for about eight months each year.

Direct prosperity would certainly accrue to the Eastern manufacturers and workers who would receive substantial orders, not now forthcoming, as a result of the enormously increased buying power of the workers and operators in the coal producing areas of Canada, and of the Railways and railway workers, who would benefit by its transportation.

Disbursements under the various relief acts between 1930 and March, 1936, by the Dominion, total approximately \$200,000,000. During the same period loans had to be made to the Western Provinces aggregating almost \$100,000,000. These figures work out at approximately \$50,000,000 per year, for the past six years, or about the same figure as is sent out of the country annually to pay for American coal. If this money had been kept in Canada, it would have gone far to solve the entire relief problem of the Dominion.

## WHAT A COAL POLICY OFFERS TO CANADA

Speaking in the Dominion House of Commons on March 8th last,\* the Hon. Charles A. Dunning, Minister of Finance, drew attention to the velocity of the circulation of money and pointed out that money circulated over 21 times and bank deposits over 18 times in the year 1936. From this statement can be visualized the enormous benefit to Canada, if this \$50,000,000 sent out of the country each year, could be retained in, and circulated throughout Canada some 18 to 20 times during the course of a year. One billion dollars additional circulation during the year!

This figure, stupendous as it is, tells only part of the story: it covers merely the money needlessly drained out of the country and lost to circulation in Canada. It does not cover the advantages which would accrue, from the actual creation of a similar additional amount of new wealth which can be so easily secured for the taking, from those marvellous deposits of coal with which Canada has been so richly endowed. We must add the circulation, throughout Canada, 18 to 20 times per year of this additional new wealth, to get the true picture, and it is a picture of possible prosperity which is dazzling to the imagination.

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\* Hansard Vol. LXXIV, No. 29, PP. 1255 and 1259.

Every citizen can visualize the prosperity which results from extracting the dormant wealth in the gold and nickel mines of Canada. Why have we, as a people, remained blind so long to the equally brilliant possibilities of our coal deposits?

### SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

It will be generally conceded that if it is feasible to create and retain in Canada, these large sums and the enormous circulations which would result from securing them, this object is highly desirable. It remains to consider the practicability of the proposal.

It will be contended, of course, that it is uneconomic to ship coal the long distances to Central Eastern Canada, either from the Maritime or Western Provinces, when it can be brought in from the United States by much shorter haul. It would be easy to reply that if this is uneconomic, it is equally uneconomic to ship Eastern manufactured goods to any place West of the head of the Lakes, when they could be brought in much more cheaply from places like Spokane and Seattle, or to ship them to the Maritime Provinces when they can be more easily and cheaply obtained from the States.

Another answer is provided by citing the policy adopted in the States. When

Western Canadian coal mines attempt to ship coal into places like Spokane, to which they are close, the American people consider it both economic and politic to take steps to prevent Canadian coals being sent there, and consider it worth while, both on economic and patriotic grounds, to keep the employment for their own miners, even if consumers have to pay a little more for their coal supplies. Similar opposition is no doubt encountered by the Maritime Provinces when they attempt to export coal across the International Line.

Our present dependence on American coal is not a sound economic position in which Canada should permanently remain; as Professor Leacock has pointed out recently:

"It means that our economic life can be subject to a peculiar pressure, if the United States sees fair to exercise it. To put it simply, if they like, they can FREEZE US OUT."

The course of events, so far as Western Canada is concerned, seems to have been that before it became developed, and while it was still inarticulate in the councils of the Nation, vested interests had grown up in the East, based on the importation of American coals; that both Industries and Railways had become interested in American mines and in the transportation and

marketing of American coal and that up to the present time, these vested interests have been strong enough to defeat a policy of Canadian coal for Canadians, a policy which would have been so beneficial to Canada as a whole.

In further reply one asks, was it local vested interests and narrow economics or was it high prophetic forethought which inspired the Fathers of Confederation to unite the five Eastern Provinces and to visualize for the future a great nation to extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific?

Was it sound from a purely economic point of view to drive our Railways through the unknown expanses North of Lake Superior and the forbidding fortresses of the Rocky Mountains, and to give millions of acres of Canadian land to get these Railways built and make the vision of a great Canadian Nation come true?

The real answer is that the foresight of our predecessors has made of Canada one great partnership whose existence and prosperity must depend on fair play and a square deal for all the Partners and not on the seizure of all the gains by the Senior partners at the expense of those less powerful, in the common Councils.

## APPEAL TO NATIONAL PATRIOTISM

The Dominion of Canada now is the common heritage of all: Everything which affects adversely one Partner in this Great Firm is detrimental to the concern as a whole. Success and satisfaction can be promoted only if every Partner takes his fair share of the burdens as well as of the rewards, incident to the partnership.

The outstanding burden of this immense partnership is caused by three great obstacles, for none of which was any partner responsible, for they were Nature's barriers to an United Canada. Every Partner, however, must bear his fair share of this burden imposed by Nature, and the Senior and stronger partners cannot be heard to say that the losses caused by these barriers must be borne entirely by the Junior and weaker members of the organization.

These barriers are: The Rocky Mountains — the barren and uninhabited rocks around the Northern shores of the Great Lakes, and the vast stretch between Central Canada and the Maritime Provinces.

These are natural obstacles to Confederation and Dominion. If pure economics had ruled events in years gone by, the Dominion of Canada never would have been born. Its natural channels of trade were North and South

and each Province would have tended to coalesce on the ground of economic interest, with the peoples immediately to the south.

But the people of Canada, led on by the Fathers of Confederation, decided otherwise and started to create the Canada of today, with its domain stretching from ocean to ocean. They artificially forced its channels of trade from East to West by means of Railways and tariffs, regardless of economic conditions, but with the vision always before them of the greater Canada it is our privilege to know and enjoy.

With this history behind us for the past seventy years, it is futile now to try and contest the natural corollary that Canadian coal must travel East and West along the trade channels the Dominion has created. The Ontario and Quebec partners, as patriotic Canadians should not be heard to say that in the case of coal this trade channel, should be diverted North and South for their individual benefit, regardless of the losses to the partnership as a whole, while at the same time they should retain all the other advantages derivable from their membership in this Great Concern.

*Twenty-Two*



## SO LITTLE DONE — SO MUCH TO DO!

From time to time, Governments have been more or less impressed with the necessity of doing something to solve the coal problem, but so far anything done has been more in the nature of a sop and no real effort has been made to deal with this National problem as a whole.

Certain tariffs within the general tariff scheme have been imposed to help the Canadian coal industry.

Certain subventions have been granted under various orders-in-council, reciting,

“the desirability of encouraging, insofar as economically possible, the development of a market in the Province of Ontario for Alberta coal.”

or reciting, (i)

“That the Government appreciates the difficulties which still confront the Canadian coal industry and desires to facilitate the maintenance of existing markets.” (ii)

or reciting,

“That the importance of an extension of the market for Canadian coal is appreciated and that the Government is willing to facilitate this by granting financial assistance to the Canadian coal industry.” (iii)

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(i) P.C. 740 See Coal Statistics for Canada, 1936, P. 110.

(ii) P.C. 894 See Coal Statistics for Canada, 1936, P. 111.

(iii) P.C. 1861 See Coal Statistics for Canada, 1936, P. 108.

The effect of all these tariffs and subventions has been merely to increase, by about 350,000 tons per year, the tonnage of Western Canadian coal going to the Ontario market.

The combined effect of the tariffs and subventions seems to have been, that the price of American coal has been somewhat reduced so as to meet the tariffs, thus saving the consumer from any loss, while at the same time the Government has collected enough from the tariffs to pay the subventions and retain a small margin or profit.

That this policy has entirely failed to meet or solve the real problem, is apparent from the fact that out of about 30,000,000 tons of coal used in Canada last year, 14,338,189 tons were imported from the United States of America.

It is submitted as a conclusion from the foregoing facts, that both in the interests of Western Canada and the Maritime Provinces and of the Dominion as a whole, the problem should be squarely faced and that it should be accepted as part of the National policy, that Canadian coal should ultimately be used throughout Canada, and that this change should be brought about as rapidly as possible, with due regard to all interests concerned.

## THE SOLUTION RECOMMENDED

The recommendation made as to how this can be accomplished is that all importations of coal should be forthwith taken under the control of the Dominion Government by Legislation, and that all future importations of American coal should be made under Government permit. Approximately 1,000,000 tons of Canadian coal go into the United States annually as against over 14,-000, 000 tons imported from the States last year. As a matter of permanent policy the States might be given permits to send into Canada ton for ton against what they take from us. As regards all further importations of American coal, they should come in under a quota to be fixed annually, such quota getting less each year as the market adapted itself to Canadian coal and supplies became available, until eventually the Canadian market was reserved exclusively for Canadian coal. The Dominion Fuel Board might well be given extended powers and be asked to assist in working out the policy indicated.

If the carrying out of this policy were spread over a short period of years, Eastern industries and Eastern householders would be able gradually to adapt themselves to the use of Canadian coal as replacements in equipment were made, and as they gradually became

accustomed to the best methods of burning Canadian coal.

An objection may be based on the suggestion that Western coals may deteriorate during transportation, causing more loss than reasonably can be absorbed. A few years ago this objection may have been one of substance, but today it can be asserted confidently that there is available on the market, at reasonable cost, modern equipment capable of burning in any industrial plant, the finest sizes, even the dust and breakages, from every type of Canadian coal. This will fully take care of any breakages in transit for every Eastern dealer and enable him to supply for household use, any size of Lump coal which the householder has been accustomed to use.

In negotiations with our friends across the border, no objection in principle can be taken to the permit and quota system above suggested. It has been put in force by the American Government in relation to Canadian cattle going into the States. It has been put in force by Britain in reference to the acceptance of Canadian bacon and other agricultural products. It is not subject to the same objections, during the pending trade negotiations, that would be urged against any increase in existing tariffs. Coal is actually today the

subject of an agreement permitting the entry into the Irish Free State of British coal, in exchange for permission to send Irish cattle into the British markets. This agreement has been renewed recently, showing the satisfactory results secured by both parties under the original agreement.

If the permit and quota system were once in force, it would give the Canadian Government an enormous bargaining factor to secure entry into the States of larger quantities of Canadian cattle, lumber, manufactured goods, and agricultural products. It is quite evident that the importation of American coal could not and would not be stopped at once, but the Canadian Government would have immediately this valuable bargaining counter in their hands, in addition to such bargaining powers as already exist.

With a gradual change over, little inconvenience or loss would be sustained by Eastern interests and any such loss would be far less than the millions that have been and still are being lost, through the inability of Western Governments, Municipalities and individuals to meet their contractual obligations.

### **VESTED INTERESTS**

While it is realized that objections will be urged strenuously by certain

vested interests bound up with American mines, and American transportation, or engaged in the retail selling of American coal, these interests will be able, over the indicated period, to adapt themselves to transporting and handling Canadian coal instead, and even if their interests are affected somewhat, they should not be allowed to stand in the way of a reform which is so obviously in the interest of the whole Dominion.

So far as Eastern manufacturers are concerned, in accordance with the principles laid down in the recent report of Mr. Justice Turgeon, they should, in return for the protection they are getting, be prepared to make some contribution to enable their Western fellow countrymen to pay for their goods.

The railways may well be asked to take their share in helping solve the problem. With the railway contention that it requires an \$8.00 freight rate to bring coal from West to East, or in other words that they must get \$24,000 to haul a freight train of 3,000 tons of coal from West to East and bring back the empty cars, it is difficult to agree, but if their contention even remotely approaches accuracy, they are suffering far more, owing to existing Western conditions, than any immediate small loss they could expect to result from being asked to bring Western coal to

the East at the lowest possible rates, that would cover their haulage cost.

### **BENEFITS TO BE GAINED**

The benefits to be gained by the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec from a prosperous West and prosperous Maritime Provinces would be large, from a purely business point of view.

The benefits to the railway workmen, at present laid off or working only part time, from increased railway haulage, and extra work in railway work shops, and the benefits to impoverished miners would be another great boon to the entire country, and would largely enhance for the benefit of the East, the purchasing power of large numbers of our people.

When all reasonable assistance has been obtained from Manufacturing, Financial, Railway and consuming interests towards the object in view, and when all help arising from the present subventions (obtained from current tariffs) have been utilized, then the Dominion Government should step in and treat the natural barriers, already referred to, as obstacles to the progress and well-being of Canada which must be faced and surmounted by the help of the people of Canada as a whole.

It is confidently submitted that any temporary cost or loss would be far more

than offset by the increased prosperity of the entire country, which in turn would provide the Dominion with Increased revenues on the one hand, and on the other hand largely eliminate the present expenditures for relief purposes, and the strain on our currency.

The further resulting contentment in the Western and Maritime Provinces as distinct from the present feeling that they are suffering grave injustices, would be of inestimable value, to the Dominion and to the Central Provinces, whose fair-minded consideration of these proposals is asked by their fellow Canadians.

Respectfully submitted,

NATIONAL COAL COMMITTEE, *and*  
WESTERN CANADA FUEL ASSOCIATION.









